

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Tom Town Historic District

other names/site number Calton Mill; Carter Canning Co.; Sperandio Canning Co.

2. Location

street & number Adjacent County Road VV

N/A ☐ not for publication

city, town Pleasant Ridge

N/A ☐ vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Barry code 009 zip code 65769

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

☒ private

☐ public-local

☐ public-State

☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

☐ building(s)

☒ district

☐ site

☐ structure

☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

2

1

3

Noncontributing

 buildings

 sites

 structures

 objects

0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official G. Tracy Mehan III, Director

Date 11/7/89

Department of Natural Resources and State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture/Subsistence

Cannery

Industry/Processing

Mill

Energy Facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in use

7. Description
Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Mill and Cannery Complex

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Wood/Weatherboard

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Tom Town Historic District consists of two buildings (a mill and a cannery) and a single structure (a boiler house) which are the last remnants of an historic Ozarks agricultural complex. The mill, cannery and cannery boiler house possess integrity of location - they sit on their original site; setting - the historic physical characteristics of the site remain unchanged; and materials and workmanship - the mill and cannery complex remain essentially unaltered from the period of historic significance. The Tom Town Historic District conveys important historic associations in Ozarks agricultural history and reflects the recurrent optimism that pervaded economic development initiatives in the area; its survival is remarkable as a representative example of impermanent Ozarks wood construction.

☒ See continuation sheet

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Tom Town Historic District

Section number 7 Page 1

The Tom Town Historic District lies in a narrow valley created by the Little Flat Creek as it winds its way to join the White River in Missouri's extreme southwest Ozarks.¹ Unmarked, chert gravel and dirt county roads lead to this isolated, pastoral site in northwestern Barry County. Fairly steep slopes, covered with oak and hickory timber rise above this site to form narrow, rugged ridge tops which, in turn, shortly give way to relatively undulating and open pasture and crop lands. The narrow valley consists of shallow alluvial soil made sandy and gravelly with decomposed chert and limestone.

Tom Town, once a busy Ozark hamlet, now sets quiet and isolated on the Randall Family farm. Only four of the original seven buildings/structures remain. A mill, cannery and boiler house retain historic integrity. The former millwright's house has been extensively modified from its historic appearance and is presently used as a rental property; it is not included within the district's boundaries. The sawmill, blacksmith shop, and grocery are gone. No cultural resources inventory has identified subsurface components within this district although the potential for such components would seem high given the long term historic occupation of the property. The property's eligibility for the National Register under criterion D is possible but is not evaluated for this registration effort.

Situated on the east bank of the Little Flat Creek, the Calton Mill (building c) and Carter Cannery and Boiler House (building a & structure b) represent the only significant remains of Tom Town. An improved dirt road, commonly referred to as Calton Mill road, separates the two buildings. Calton Mill visually dominates the district as it is the only two-story building and the most substantial one in the district. Perched on a slight rise on the creek bank, its weather-stained silhouette physically orients the observer towards the hamlet's center, the creek, and the cannery.

In comparison, the Carter Cannery sprawls over low land, to the northeast of the mill, on a site overgrown with vegetation. This stable but dilapidated one and one-half story building visually appears close to the ground and is more horizontal than vertical. Due to its original flimsy construction it does not retain the same quality of integrity of construction as does the mill; yet, with all of its equipment, furniture, and conveyors still in place, it retains its ability to reflect its significant historic function. This structure is graphic evidence as to the seasonal nature of the rural cannery and transient nature of the truck farming business in the Ozarks.

Calton Mill (photograph 3) hovers over Little Flat Creek on a site kept clear of scrub. Built circa 1870, it is a water-powered grist mill with a turbine. The mill is a two-story, rectangular building which rests on a stone and timber foundation. Vertical oak planks cover the stone and timber foundation. Oak

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Tom Town Historic District

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clapboards cover the walls and oak shingles compose the steep gable roof. The front facade faces southeast and is broken by a long, narrow rectangular door on the first story; this break is repeated on the second story.

The rear elevation (photograph 1) faces northwest and mirrors the front facade on the first and second levels. More of the mill understory is exposed on this side as the mill is perched on the edge of the creek bank; this exposure creates the illusion of a three-story building. Vertical planking has been torn away from the foundation's protective covering; this opening gives access to the understory as well as to the turbine and its associated gears (photograph 6). The southwest elevation (photograph 2) is an unbroken expanse of oak clapboards. However, the northeast side elevation (photograph 4) is broken by a small addition to the mill. This addition, probably added in the 1880s, served as the miller's office; its wall construction disrupts the continuous expanse of horizontal oak clapboards. Vertical planks with butt joints cover the addition. A small, four-light window is centered high on the northeast facade of the addition. The addition's oak shake shingle roof forms a continuous line with the roof of the mill proper.

While the exterior of the mill is in fair condition, the interior of the mill remains in very good condition. The interior space and machinery placement reflect the function of this building and the various stages of the milling process. The bucket elevators and screw conveyors took the wheat and corn to the top of the mill by mechanical power, produced by the water and turbine, and carried it down by gravity through the grinding process, re-elevated the product and carried it down through the bolting sieves, through dryers and coolers, and then into storage bins. Some of the bucket elevator belts and pulleys are still in place.

The second floor is an open expanse where grain was washed, dried, sifted, cooled and stored. A grain cleaner, separator and purifier still stand at the rear (northwest)-center of the floor next to a storage bin and a long, horizontal flour sifter frame. A Howes-Silver Creek conical separator stands front (southeast)-center (photograph 10). The dryer, additional sifters and storage bins are gone. A narrow, steep stairwell in the southwest corner leads to the first floor and to the prime grinders (photograph 7).

Water, from the Little Flat Creek, powered Calton Mill. About one-third mile upstream from the mill, a dam was constructed which diverted water from the creek into a man-made mill race which paralleled the creek. The slow-moving and, often, minimal water volume in Little Flat Creek, necessitated this unusually long raceway in order that a sufficient head of water would develop to turn the turbine. The water entered the understory causeway on the northwest side of the mill and fell approximately 25 feet into a man-made rock shaft.

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Tom Town Historic District

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The turbine, four feet in breadth and eight horsepower strong, still sets at the bottom of this shaft which is sunk into the limestone creek bank. The shaft opens slightly above water level onto the Little Flat Creek behind the mill (photograph 28).

Approximately 600 feet diagonally to the northeast, and across the Calton Mill Road but on the same side of Little Flat Creek, is the tomato cannery (building 1). Built circa 1920 it now sets amidst scrub timber and a heavy undergrowth of vines (photographs 11-19). Immediately proximate to this building is the boiler house structure (photograph 21). The landscape around the mill softly undulates with sawdust debris left from the saw mill which once stood to the north of the cannery (photograph 19). The tomato cannery, variously known as the Carter Canning Company and the Sperandio Canning Company, is a one and one-half story, irregular, wood frame structure. The wall construction consists of vertical oak planks with butt joints. The roof is of asphalt and composition tile; the roof line is irregular but generally presents the image of a low cross gable.

The cannery rests on a concrete foundation (photograph 18). The upper half-story forms a loft area which runs from the south facade to three-fourths of the way to the north facade (photographs 11 and 15).

The south facade is broken by a divided door which opens onto the main level and onto the loft area (photograph 11). Two screen window openings are irregularly placed at each end of the east facade (photographs 14 and 16). The west facade forms an "L" (photograph 15) and represents an addition to the original structure; its construction was nearly contemporaneous with the original building. Double, sliding doors are contained within the north facade of the main building while a long, narrow, horizontal span of screen windows dominate the north facade of the "L" (photographs 13 and 15). The west facade of the "L" is also broken by a long span of narrow, horizontal screen windows.

As with the grist mill, the cannery's interior spaces reflect the different processes and division of labor in the canning of tomatoes. Most of the cannery's original machinery still exists at the site. Tomatoes were brought into the cannery on conveyors on the south side (photograph 22) and were placed in three-to-four gallon, wooden buckets. After they were scalded in order to loosen their skins, they were taken to the peeling room where women sat along tables of oak and aluminum (photograph 24). Oak planks formed the sides of the table while aluminum covered the top. A trough, some six inches wide, divided the center of each table top which sloped downward toward this opening. Workers discarded peelings in this trough; water flowed under the building through a concrete raceway through a pipe laid in a deep ditch which was perpendicular to the cannery and to the mill's raceway. From the peeling room, the tomatoes went to the cooking area by conveyor.

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Tom Town Historic District

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In the cooking area, they were placed in cans and the can lids crimped. In turn, the cans were placed in large wire baskets and lowered into cookers which are approximately 45" in diameter and 6 to 7 feet deep (photographs 27 and 25). Here, they cooked from 30 to 45 minutes. An overhead hoist then moved the cooked tomatoes onto a screen conveyor where the cans cooled (photograph 23); at times, the cans were cooled on the floor or ground outside. They were then labeled, packaged and stored until loaded on trucks and transported to the freight yards at Monett, Missouri (photograph 26).

Steam-generated energy operated the cannery. A small brick structure directly east of the cannery (photograph 21) housed the boiler which drew its water from a spring. The structure merely provided protective covering for the boiler.

The cannery interior and exterior are in very poor condition. The roof is partially collapsed over the storage area. However, the equipment and the furniture sit in the same places as when the cannery operated and remain in fair to good condition. The cannery's historical integrity is evidenced by the presence of this equipment, in place, as if it were waiting for the next tomato crop and shift of workers. Although in poor condition, the cannery building elicits an understanding of how the small, Ozark "shade-tree" canneries were a study in quick, expedient construction using local materials and local ingenuity. These buildings were built with minimal investment for they served only a seasonal economic activity. It is remarkable that the cannery survives at all, and is especially unique in that it retains its original equipment.

Two very small, wood frame sheds, in very poor condition (photograph 19), have been left outside of the district's boundaries due to their size, deterioration, and distance from the other nominated resources. The only other building left at Tom Town is a small one and one-half story, modern residence. It is said to have been the miller's house, but it has been so severely modified that any original integrity has been destroyed. For this reason, Tom Town's only remaining residential building has been left outside the boundaries of the historic district.

The current owners have covered some of the cannery's equipment and provide housing for a person to guard the site. They would like the site to serve as a "study ground" for preservationists and industrial archeologists and eventually be accessible to the public. Stabilization and eventual rehabilitation of this property is being seriously considered by the present owners and is, in part, contingent on National Register designation.

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Industry

Period of Significance

c. 1870-1939

Significant Dates

c. 1870

1920

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Tom Town Historic District is eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its historical significance in the development of COMMERCE and INDUSTRY in Barry County, Missouri. By looking at the history and material remains of the Calton Mill and the Carter Canning Company (the last significant buildings left in Tom Town), a broader understanding of the economic development of the Missouri Ozarks can be obtained. These two buildings are the sole examples of a water-powered grist mill and a cannery with equipment left in Barry County. This district symbolizes a rural Ozark hamlet's transition from a local bartering economy to a short-lived integration into the national market economy. The activities which occurred within these buildings reflect the continual adaptations many similar communities had to make to the Ozark environment. A hilly, rocky terrain with poor, shallow soils forced constant economic adjustments in order to find a competitive niche in America's mainstream economy. The milling and canning processes further introduced this hamlet to the industrial work ethics and disciplines of that economy.

Calton Mill, a water-powered grist mill built between 1870 and 1880, became this frontier area's first major exposure to, and first competitive effort in, an industrial market place. The mill, as a consumer, encouraged greater concentration on grain production. It slightly reduced the area's concentration from traditional general farming to intensive grain and livestock production. Calton Mill is the last extant grist mill in Barry County.

☒ See continuation sheet

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Tom Town Historic District

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The Carter Cannery, built circa 1920, demonstrates the further diversification and adaptation of this economy. The canning factory enabled the community to turn to an additional source of income -- the production of small fruit and vegetables and the truck farming business -- just as the area's prime timber was depleted and the area's soils proved incapable of sustaining intensive, profitable grain and livestock production. This cannery familiarized the rural and relatively isolated village of Tom Town with national economic competition and with the ethics and discipline of the industrial work place. Carter Cannery is the last tomato cannery complex still standing in the area.²

Both properties have the ability to reflect important historic associations in the history of this region and merit National Register of Historic Places designation.

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Tom Town Historic District

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Historical Background:

Tom Town emerged from the homestead of Morgan Calton and his attempts to derive more than a subsistence living from the Ozark terrain. Calton migrated from Kentucky to the area in the 1840s and settled along the Little Flat Creek.³ In this narrow valley, Calton could take advantage of the close proximity of water, a shallow stream crossing point, and the relatively fertile bottom soil of the creek's floodplain. The settlement was eventually named after Calton's eldest son, Tom, and remained a site controlled by the Calton family's six children until the turn of the century. It functioned as a point of economic exchange; Tom Town's population was dispersed within a five to seven mile radius of Calton's mill along the Little Flat Creek and its tributaries.

The 1850 census shows Calton, as it does the other neighboring farmers, engaged in traditional general farming. Calton owned 48 acres and farmed 28 acres. His livestock included milk cows, oxen, cattle, sheep, hogs, and horses. His family produced 108 bushels of wheat, 375 bushels of Indian corn, 30 bushels of oats, 25 pounds of wool, 25 bushels of Irish potatoes and 50 pounds of butter.⁴ Local legend speaks of his whiskey distillery, and it is obvious that much of his grain was being turned into liquor. In rural, isolated areas of rough terrain, this was frequently the pattern followed. It was cheaper and easier to transport liquor than it was to haul wagons of grain to distant markets.

Tom Calton soon capitalized upon the area's grain production, its need for a market as a source of cash income, and its need for flour and meal. Sometime between 1870 and 1880, he built the Calton Mill. Like his father, Tom Calton engaged in general farming; he farmed 9 of the 40 acres he possessed. He, too, had horses, cows, oxen, hogs, sheep, and cattle. In 1870, he produced 50 bushels of Indian corn, 8 bushels of Irish potatoes, 5 pounds of butter, and 25 pounds of wool.⁵ While farming less and seemingly producing less than his father, he was in the process of constructing the present-day Calton Mill on or near the site of his father's distillery.

Initially he constructed a basic tub mill; it was a two-story, wooden frame structure operated by a water-powered turbine which set in a man-made stone pit. As Calton Mill ground flour and corn meal within burr stones, it is assumed the mill was built closer to 1870 than 1880.

By 1880, most American mills used rollers in the reduction process.⁶ The majority of Missouri's southwestern and south-central mills built in this time period, such as McDowell, Greer, Alley Spring, Dawt and Dillard used rollers. However, those mills constructed in the 1840s-1860s period, such as Jolly and Aid-Hodgson, employed burr stones.⁷

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The mill's raceway makes Calton Mill unique among southern Missouri's extant mills.⁸ It is unusually long -- approximately one-fourth to one-third of a mile in length. Since Little Flat Creek intermittently contains a low volume of water with minimal velocity, Calton had to construct a narrow, long channel in which a sufficient head of water could quickly build. The raceway's grade provided a four-foot fall but to further increase the water power on the turbine, Calton set the turbine in a 25-foot man-made shaft which created, in effect, a miniature waterfall with sufficient power to rapidly rotate the turbine.

The 1880 Census shows that Calton Mill represented a \$1,000 capital investment; its burrs were capable of grinding 25 bushels of grain per day. In a year, it produced 100 barrels of wheat flour, 8 barrels of rye flour, 383,420 pounds of corn meal, and 23,660 pounds of feed. The total value of Calton's yearly products was \$2,849.00.⁹

Beyond these statistics lies the real significance of Calton Mill. Merchant grist mills encouraged a community's economic development by providing a market for grain and thereby cash or credit with which to purchase additional foodstuffs. The presence of these grist mills pushed farmers caught in a subsistence level lifestyle into an industrial, market economy by providing new markets for their agricultural produce and cash for any surplus crops.¹⁰

Besides stimulating the local economy and extending the geographical boundaries of the community's trade patterns, the presence of a gristmill encouraged subsequent establishment of associated industries. At Tom Town, a grocery store, blacksmith shop, distillery, saw mill, and cannery evolved which either utilized the power of the mill's turbine and/or complemented the mill's activities. In later years the sawmill used electrical power generated by the mill. The cannery used water diverted from the mill's raceway and crates used by the cannery were assembled at the grist mill.

There were numerous mills constructed along the fast-moving streams and rivers of Barry County between 1850 and 1880.¹¹ They were similar in size and grinding capacity to Calton's; the one exception was that they often did not grind year round. Of the 13 mills in Barry County, which were described by the 1850, 1860, 1870 and 1880 Products of Industry census, only two remain. Those two are Calton and McDowell. McDowell's mill is located several miles further down stream; it no longer sets on the stream and was converted at the turn of the century to a steam mill. Calton Mill remains the sole water-powered mill with its original machinery in Barry County. Local residents remember the mill operating as late as the early 1940s.¹² It was the presence of the mill which influenced the construction of the tomato cannery circa 1920 in Tom Town. The mill's existing raceway could bring a forceful stream of water through the cannery to flush out the vegetable debris.

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By the late 1890s, southwest Missouri Ozark farmers found their agrarian base, built upon general farming and livestock and grain production, challenged. This section of the Ozarks originally provided the initial settlers with fertile soil along the river bottoms and open areas of fresh, clear-cut timber land. However, as part of the Ozarks range, this area contains some of the oldest soil in the nation. By the 1890s, much of the bottom soils were extremely vulnerable to the depletion of minerals. Once the prime timber was cleared from the ridges, the soil quickly gave out after a few years of cultivation and erosion.

Most farms were small; in 1910, the average number of improved acres per farm was only 63.8 acres.¹³ The soils were not naturally durable enough to hold up under continuous grain production such as was occurring elsewhere in Missouri. The small acreages of marginal land could not profitably compete with the commercial corn, wheat, hog and cattle operations to the north and west of this region. The grist mills, such as Calton, no longer supplied the impetus to produce more grain. Grain production statistics in 1918 for Barry County reflected this decline in that Barry now produced less wheat, corn and hay per acre than any surrounding county.¹⁴

"Due to the terrain, accessibility and marketing, Ozark agriculture (had always) been marginal..." and experimental by necessity.¹⁵ Farm advisors lamented the inability of the area to compete in a national market composed of large-scale, intensive farms.¹⁶ Due to the nature of the terrain and soil, it was neither profitable to mechanize nor to enlarge farms in an attempt to compete in the traditional midwestern farm market place.¹⁷ This led the Barry County farmer to seek another economic niche through diversification which included specialty crops suitable to shallow, rocky, acidic soils.

It is in this climate of change that C.C. Carter built, circa 1920, the Carter Canning Company.¹⁸ Carter lived, not in Tom Town, but approximately five miles away in Kings Prairie.¹⁹ However, his cannery needed electricity and water which Kings Prairie could not provide, but Tom Town could. Additionally, the sawmill could provide locally cut lumber for construction of the cannery and for the crates which the cannery required. Carter built his mill in response to the changing agrarian economy. His cannery, in combination with others, helped usher in the truck farming business. The area's new focus on crop specialties, such as strawberries, tomatoes, beans, cucumbers, melons and orchards, decreased the farmer's dependence on grains and livestock and his economic vulnerability in a market where he was at an inherent disadvantage.²⁰

With the completion of the railroad connections at the turn of the century, Barry County could reach into St. Louis, Kansas City, Chicago, San Francisco,

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Tom Town Historic District

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and Dallas. The 1913 Missouri Bureau of Labor Statistics urged Barry countians to build canneries, stave and box factories, and to concentrate on fresh produce.²¹ State horticulturists praised the new crops and new economy as ideal ways to preserve the small farm, secure incomes, schools, and good roads which all added up to the preservation of an ideal American culture.²²

Thus, Carter's Cannery became an integral component to Tom Town, and the economic success and failure of its dispersed community of farmers. The cannery enabled the hamlet to expand its agricultural base by providing national commercial markets for its products. Only six miles from Monett, Missouri, where a major rail division existed for the Frisco Railroad, Tom Town farmers and the cannery could and did capably exploit the regional demand for fresh vegetables and fruits and the national demand for canned vegetables.

Most farms had some strawberry acreage and most, within an eight to ten mile radius of a cannery, raised one to three acres of tomatoes.²³ By 1926, one area newspaper touted that the region now helped feed the world. While it mentioned 64 cars of mixed livestock and 55 cars of flour leaving Barry County, it also mentioned 184 cars of strawberries and 19 cars of canned goods.²⁴ These speciality crops were suited to the time and setting; they could be grown on the rough, rocky hillsides and in acidic soils. The canneries filled an economic niche by taking advantage of the availability of cheap farm surpluses and the lack of rigorous competition from other areas.²⁵ Truck farming and raising canning tomatoes began around 1900 and rapidly expanded.

Communities competed for canneries to the extent of contributing labor and materials for construction and establishing committees to sign up guaranteed acreage for the canneries.²⁶ Editors told their readers not to mistrust cannery owners as they would give "good market" and would provide income for their surplus vegetables.²⁷ They reminded them tomato farming required little investment other than seed, fertilizer, and the willingness to work.

"Many of the early Ozark canneries were no more than family enterprises that operated only when prices were high..." and were often referred to as "shade-tree" canneries.²⁸ The erection of these factories involved two types of costs, investment and operational. Where the factory produced for only short periods, as in fruit and vegetable canning, lightly constructed buildings of one story which required minimal investment were generally built.

Unlike its urban counterpart, which operated all year and thus justified a large investment in a substantial edifice, the rural, seasonal fruit and vegetable canneries were "... far more flimsy in construction."²⁹ As a result of their flimsy construction, seasonal use, and their owner's inability to predict revenue in a volatile business, these structures tended not to

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survive the lack of on-going maintenance and the scavenger's desire for lumber and machine parts. The Carter Cannery is unique among canneries that once could be found within the Ozarks. Unlike its contemporaries the cannery has withstood the fate of many other plain lumber buildings in the region; the normal course of events is that such buildings are quickly salvaged for their usable wood. The cannery buildings retain integrity of location--a critical factor in reflecting Ozarks history--as well as original design, a critical factor in the cannery's ability to directly inform the viewer of its function.

The machinery, tables, bins and other features of the cannery's internal workings remain in place and convey a feeling for how the operation worked. Perhaps most significant is the fact that the materials and workmanship apparent in the cannery's construction, though admittedly dilapidated, speak of the history of vernacular design and construction in the region. The impermanent nature of Ozark construction, alluded to above, has been systematic of a recurrent theme in the area's history - a history of rapid development, followed by a precipitous crash, as market forces undermined the fragile economic structure supporting the newest innovation. The majority of the cannery's physical structure, identity and character remain intact from the time of its association with significant historic events in the development of the Ozark's commercial history.

The development of the Ozark's canning industry took on the qualities of an exponential phenomenon early on. In 1905, there were only three or four canneries in the Missouri and Arkansas Ozarks, but by 1925, there were 350 canneries with 400 owners.³⁰ Carter, a part of this expansion, encouraged the establishment of other area canneries. When the Berry Growers Union met in nearby Monett to debate the Maull Company's plans for a cannery in their community, C. C. Carter was present. Far from being fearful of the competition, Carter said the new factory would not interfere with his business but benefit it. He told the crowd, which had driven through a snowstorm to attend the meeting, that he had a successful and growing business for several years and that farmers should "...leave off some of the corn and oats acreage and raise something in which there was more money."³¹

Farmers were told they could receive at least \$14.00 per ton which might earn them \$100.00 to \$200.00 an acre.³² Carter related that he had cleared 30 acres for tomatoes at a cost of \$800.00, but expected to clear \$3,000 in the first season. He stressed that the investment per acre would not exceed \$25.00 for labor, plants, and fertilizer. Carter reminded members of the Union that tomatoes were a good crop to alternate with strawberries in that the mulched plants were good fertilizer. Finally, Carter told the members that canneries built "...up a community by bringing in foreign money."³³

By 1925, Carter had expanded his business by taking in a partner, F.M. Powell, who owned Tom Town's grocery store. He further diversified his interests by going into partnership with the Calton Brothers at their saw mill.³⁴ Carter

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thus developed a site where he could conveniently sell tomato seedlings and fertilizer to farmers and a site which provided him with lumber and staves for the cannery. Carter generally put out two acres of seed which produced the tomato seedlings for farmers who guaranteed acreage to his cannery.³⁵ He offered planting and cultivating instructions at the cannery.³⁶ As a result of Carter's activities, Tom Town's and Carter's economic successes and failures were integrally linked.

While the mill had introduced the community to industrial technology and a capitalistic economy, the cannery went a step further in this rural village by creating a work force now familiarized with industrial discipline and priorities. Furthermore, the cannery provided a new, and more often a first, source of employment for women. As with most canneries, the Carter Cannery did not function year round. Generally, there were 13 active weeks, from mid-July to mid-September, for the tomato season. The seasonal nature of the food processing industry, "...reinforced the notion of women's participation in the labor force as..." merely temporary and supplemental.³⁷ Women could now contribute cash to the family income through seasonal work.

The labor force was generally drawn from Ozark communities where fruits and vegetables were not grown on a commercial scale.³⁸ Often relatives from distant communities combined work in the canneries with an extended family visit. The Tom Town news in the Monett Weekly Times often spoke of these visits in terms of family reunions rather than in terms of itinerant workers seeking temporary employment.³⁹ Often the Frisco railroads and regional radio stations advertised for strawberry pickers, preferably entire families, for the local growers.⁴⁰ Frequently, many growers who were also cannery operators retained a few of these pickers, gave them camp sites, employed them in "filler" tasks and thus had workers for the tomato season.

The canning process involved cleaning, scalding, peeling, packing and sealing cans, cooking, labeling and packaging the finished product. Generally three to four tomatoes went into each cold can which was then steamed to expand the air; they were then cooked in large iron crates immersed in boiling water for 30 to 45 minutes.⁴¹ In 1925, Carter employed 42 people at the cannery.⁴² Peelers were paid on a piece work basis and, in 1925, were receiving between \$2.00 and \$2.50 per day.⁴³ This averaged 10 to 12 cents per bucket of peeled tomatoes.

Division of labor was based upon gender. Women and children picked, worked with peeling room and, frequently, the labeling and packaging room. Men worked the heavy equipment, fired and maintained the boiler, lifted packed boxes, loaded and unloaded trucks, and drove loads to the railroad yards.⁴⁴

The bottom line was that much of seasonal labor was for operations which required little skill and seemed "...to come naturally to women who may work at wages lower than would have to be paid for men who do the same job."⁴⁵

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A local newspaper editor reminded the community that, "...thousands of women and children are given employment peeling and canning tomatoes..."⁴⁶ The newspaper urged "... women and girls...(to) sacrifice...and go to help the factory management and it (would) be creditable in them to do it."⁴⁷ To help Ozark industry, mothers were told "...to gather their children and set forth to help the bread winners of the family..." and that their earnings, rather than being squandered would buy school clothing and necessities; more importantly, they would be "...not only richer in dollars but also rosy and robust, with hearty appetites and happy hearts."⁴⁸

In September of 1925, tomatoes piled high on platforms while the 34 Barry County canneries worked to full capacity, ran night shifts and competed for labor. Papers called for all workers to come aid the local industry which had lost girls to a new fall school term.⁴⁹ Factories tried to borrow workers from other factories and men were told that it would be to their credit to help peel.⁵⁰ The Carter Cannery met the crisis and bought much of the extra tomatoes from the canneries which had over-extended their commitments in guaranteed acreage.⁵¹ On one Saturday, Carter's cannery produced 16,500 cans of tomatoes.⁵²

Unlike many of his rural counterparts, who commercially canned only tomatoes, Carter canned corn, beans and blackberries. At the first of the 1925 canning season, with 42 employees, the cannery produced 2,400 cans of corn, 25 cases of tomatoes, and 35 cases of beans.⁵³ Early one July, Carter announced he would try a novelty item and advertised for "...both tame and wild blackberries...;" he agreed to pay \$2.00 a crate and would return the crate. All he asked for was "...a full quart crate."⁵⁴ The local editor touted Carter's success and remarked that a new industrial process had been brought to the Ozarks via Carter who now had access to a special enamel treatment for lining the insides of cans for blackberries; thus, a new export and source of income had been realized.⁵⁵

Farmers benefitted; they found in these shade tree canneries a source of cash. Carter generally paid \$12.50 per ton of tomatoes and \$40.00 per ton of stringless green beans.⁵⁶ The average tomato acreage was from one to three acres; one of the few producers of large quantities worked 10 to 12 acres.⁵⁷ Local farmers and neighbors benefitted in other ways. During the early part of the season, Carter and Powell opened the cannery for community canning; women were told to "...bring corn in shuck and your beans snipped and broken..." Often, these events turned into community picnics.⁵⁸

However, farmers and cannery owners were held at the whim of nature and bound to the law of supply and demand. By late September of 1925, Carter paid only \$10.00 per ton and stored his product and waited for a better market. Finally,

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in July of 1926, he shipped a freight car of Monett Brand Tomatoes.⁵⁹ The local editor predicted hard times due to 1925's over-production of an "inferior quality pack."⁶⁰ By July of 1926, F. M. Powell sold his interest to the Calton Brothers who owned Calton Mill and were Carter's partners at the sawmill.⁶¹

By the end of the 1926 season, Carter and Calton, as did all area canners, faced a dry season and challenges from an emerging local environmental group. The local chapter of the Izaak Walton League publicized the disadvantages of an industrialized Ozark. Meeting in Monett, they warned that city sewage, canneries, lead and zinc mines, and sawmills were polluting the clear Ozark streams and rivers. They feared the extermination of the black bass and its spawning grounds.⁶² They told citizens that "...in the crowd it is no longer possible to keep independence of solitude...(and) that rivers and streams...are the natural arteries and veins of the land...(and where there is)...no pure water, civilization becomes impossible. Never should the smaller streams and rivers be used as sewers nor as dumping places for ...vegetable wastes."⁶³ Local canneries, in the habit of dumping refuse in the nearest stream, were told that "...civilization at its best might be defined as a decent consideration of neighbors..." and that they should dig vegetable wastes back into their fields or stand to be regulated by law.⁶⁴

Regardless of the criticism, Carter's cannery continued to flush the vegetable wastes into Little Flat Creek. Water diverted from Calton Mill's raceway rushed underneath the cannery, below where the peeling tables set, and carried the matter away. Some wastes were dug back into fields but the sheer volume of a waste with high acidity limited its value as an all-purpose fertilizer.

The cannery remained in operation when an aging Carter sold it to the J.J. Sperandio and James Randall families in the early 1940s. With this sale an epoch in Ozark's industrial history was beginning to draw to a close. Although the cannery continued in operation into the 1950s, with some changes that could be evaluated as historic in their own right, the survival of the cannery was based more on Sperandio's and the Randall's ability to fit the cannery into a well organized and diversified cycle of business activity than had previously been the case. For the purpose of this registration effort the period of significance is terminated at 1939, in recognition that this historic pattern of development in Ozarks agricultural processing had crested and was in its waning stages. It is important to note, however, that the subsequent history of the cannery does provide insight into the operation of this and other canneries through time and beyond the confines of an arbitrary cutoff point for the period of significance. The period of significance is drawn at 1939 primarily because insufficient contextual information is currently available to convincingly argue for the district's exceptional significance; future

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evaluation of this possibility might support the district's exceptional importance at the state level of significance.

The developments involving the cannery subsequent to its sale in the early 1940s are relevant to its assessment as a historic property. J.J. Sperandio, partner and father-in-law to James Randall, purchased the land and buildings which comprised the Tom Town community. While the grist mill ceased operation in this time period, the sawmill and cannery were incorporated into his diversified business holdings. Sperandio had learned the key to economic prosperity in the Ozarks -- diversification and environmental adaptation as opposed to environmental confrontation. Sperandio, the largest strawberry grower in the State of Missouri, extended his interest to lumbering, livestock production, and the cannery business. "Sperandio's strategy in conquering rough, rocky and wooded wasteland, is first to clear it (of timber), then to plant tomatoes..." Following a year of tomatoes, strawberry plants are set and left for three or four years. Then the acreage is sown in orchard grass or airspeeds and used as pasture.⁶⁵ The cannery blended in with this cycle; it took care of the tomato crop and furnished additional employment for the 25 tenant families who lived and worked on his land. The timber which he felled in clearing the land was turned into usable oak lumber at the sawmill and into tomato and packing crates at the old grist mill.⁶⁶

Sperandio altered the cannery's role in the community in that it now provided a source of income for only tomato growers. He provided his tenants with three-room houses and garden spots. In return, these families worked the tomato and strawberry fields and worked in the cannery. They were provided with tomato seed and fertilizer for their own garden spots; the cannery purchased their harvest and subtracted the credit extended on the seed and fertilizer. When the crop was poor, the cannery absorbed the loss. The cannery also purchased tomatoes from the local farmers.⁶⁷

The cannery now hired up to 150 people in its peak season; the average employment force numbered 15 men and 110 women. For the most part, the tenant and neighboring farm families supplied the work force; migrants and transients were seldom used as they were perceived as being less hard-working and dependable and as having the "urge" to move on without notice. The same members of the labor force generally returned season after season with maybe "...one or two new faces a year."⁶⁸

Male employees were now paid approximately \$1.25 to \$4.00 per day. Unlike their male counterparts, women were paid not by the hour but by their production level. Women now received 20 cents per bucket of peeled tomatoes. The average number of buckets peeled per day was 20 to 25 which would equal about \$4.00 to \$5.00 a day. An extremely good worker could peel as many as 75

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buckets per day with an earning capacity of \$15.00. An hour for lunch was offered but women could continue their work and skip lunch if they did not want to lower their production. Generally, lunches were brought from home and often eaten out in the clearing to the northwest of the factory on top of the sawdust piles.⁶⁹

Workers were sometimes paid with metal or cardboard chips which could be traded at most area stores.⁷⁰ The Sperandio employees received a wage which was in keeping with the California cannery wages but exceeded the wages, by 15 cents, of those workers in the county just north of Barry.⁷¹

Incentives were provided employees. Twice a season employees were permitted to bring their own vegetables and can them. Corn, beans and beets were canned as well as tomatoes for domestic use. "Bumped" or dented cans were given to employees. Local residents recall that most people in the area both sold to and worked for the cannery.⁷²

The cannery operated until 1950 or 1952.⁷³ The tomato canning business had been on the decline since the end of World War I when much of the small fruit and vegetable processing business became dominated by California growers and canneries. In 1942, 11 of Missouri's 42 tomato canneries were in Barry County; two years later, in 1944, there were only two.⁷⁴ These two survivors did not represent a consolidation with the other canneries nor the emergence of large corporate canneries such as was the experience in California.⁷⁵ Rather, the figures representing the value of products, falling from \$443,280 in 1942 to \$65,120 in 1944, indicate that, once again, the region had lost out to other areas with better soil and better markets.⁷⁶

The area had always competed with producers in the middle Atlantic States and the Utah Valley, but, as the tomatoes in Missouri ripened later, it was competition with which Ozark growers could co-exist. The California and Pacific coast growers were a different matter. To successfully compete, growers had to obtain at least five to ten tons per acre. Missouri averaged 2.8 tons per acre.⁷⁷

Throughout the region, the growing of tomatoes and the shade tree canneries declined. Competition from a nationwide community of growers, low yields per acre, canneries organized and constructed on a temporary basis, lack of sufficient acreage and suitable alternative crop to sustain a cannery on a year-round basis, an inadequate market structure, and factories unable to meet Pure Food standards, and environmental regulations all served to kill off the tomato growers and canneries of southwest Missouri.⁷⁸ The Sperandio (Carter) Cannery lasted into the early 1950s only because it fit into a well-organized, diversified cycle of business activity.

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The Sperandio Canning Company (Carter Canning Company) complex is the remaining tomato cannery in Barry County. It stands unused but the equipment remains. The county's other canneries are either gone or only partial walls remain to speak for an industry which created not only a broader economic base and national commercial market for the area but also a pattern of work and a lifestyle for people in this rural community.

Together, the Calton Mill and the Carter/Sperandio Cannery significantly represent a historical evolution of a community's industrial and commercial expansion. From an early industrial, almost pre-industrial, community to a community totally dependent upon a national marketplace, this historic district encompasses in microcosm the economic transition from an agrarian or traditional society to an industrial, modern society.

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FOOTNOTES
Item 7 & 8

- ¹The U.S.G.S. map erroneously refers to the Little Flat Creek as Calton Creek.
- ²Priscilla Jackson-Evans performed a literature search and a windshield survey in September of 1988 within an 80-mile radius of Carter Cannery. This included southern Lawrence County and northern Barry County. In addition, numerous people were asked about canneries in southern Barry County.
- ³History of Newton, Lawrence, Barry, and McDonald Counties, Missouri. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1888, p. 317.
- ⁴Seventh Census of Agriculture of the United States - 1850, np. Manuscript census located at the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri.
- ⁵Ninth Census of Agriculture of the United States - 1870, np. Manuscript census located at the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri.
- ⁶Herman Steen. Flour Milling in America. Minneapolis: T.S. Denison and Co., Inc., 1963, p. 47.
- ⁷Priscilla A. Evans. From research in the possession of author which was used when she wrote "Merchant Gristmills and Communities, 1820-1880: An Economic Relationship." Missouri Historical Review, V. 68, No. 3, April, 1974.

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⁸Ibid.

⁹Tenth Census of Products of Industry of the United States - 1880, np.
Manuscript census located at the State Historical Society of Missouri,
Columbia, Missouri.

¹⁰Priscilla A. Evans. "Merchant Gristmills and Communities, 1820-1880: An
Economic Relationship." Missouri Historical Review, v. 68, No. 3, April,
1974, p. 319.

¹¹Information tabulated from the 1850, 1860, 1870 and 1880 Census of Products
of Industry of the United States. Manuscript census located at the State
Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri.

¹²Interview with Mr. and Mrs. James Randall, Rural Route, Verona, Missouri,
conducted by Priscilla Jackson-Evans, Nov., 1987. Mrs. Randall is the
daughter of J.J. Sperandio; she and Mr. Randall were partners and later
owners of the Sperandio Canning Co. Interview notes in possession of
Priscilla Jackson-Evans.

¹³A.T. Sweet; E.W. Knobel; and Hugh Bennett. Soil Survey of Barry County,
Missouri. No publisher given, 1916, p. 17.

¹⁴W.J. Spillman. "Factors of Successful Farming Near Monett, Mo." Bulletin
No. 633. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Agriculture, February 25,
1918, p. 4.

¹⁵Milton D. Rafferty. "Agriculture Change in the Western Ozarks." Missouri
Historical Review. V. 69, No. 3, p. 299.

¹⁶Spillman, p. 9.

¹⁷Rafferty, p. 321.

¹⁸Monett Weekly Times, Monett, Missouri, June 30, 1925, p. 4.

¹⁹Ibid. August 20, 1926, np.

²⁰A.T. Sweet, et al., p. 12.

²¹35th Annual Report - Bureau of Labor Statistics. Jefferson City: Missouri
Bureau of Labor Statistics (MBLS), 1913, p. 195.

²²Spillman, p. 9.

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- ²³Milton D. Rafferty. The Ozarks: Land and Life. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980, p. 158.
- ²⁴Monett Weekly Times, January 15, 1926, np.
- ²⁵Rafferty. The Ozarks: Land and Life, p. 158.
- ²⁶Monett Weekly Times, February 6, 1925, p. 2 and June 5, 1925, p. 1.
- ²⁷Ibid.
- ²⁸Rafferty. The Ozarks: Land and Life, p. 158.
- ²⁹Osman Jones. Canning Practice and Control. London: Chapman and Hall, 1949, pp 5-9.
- ³⁰Monett Weekly Times, January 9, 1925, p. 1 and June 5, 1925, p. 1.
- ³¹Ibid. January 30, 1925, p. 4.
- ³²Ibid. March 12, 1926, np. and May 8, 1925, p. 1.
- ³³Ibid. January 30, 1925, p.4.
- ³⁴Ibid. January 2, 1925, p. 8; May 1, 1925, p. 4; and May 21, 1926, np.
- ³⁵Ibid. May 1, 1925, p. 4 and May 22, 1925, p. 6.
- ³⁶Ibid. May 22, 1925, p. 6.
- ³⁷Vickie Ruiz. Cannery Women/Cannery Lives. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987, p. 182.
- ³⁸Monett Weekly Times, July 2, 1926, np.
- ³⁹Ibid. September 8, 1922, p. 1
- ⁴⁰Ibid. May 21, 1926, np.
- ⁴¹Ibid. June 5, 1925, p. 1.
- ⁴²Ibid. August 7, 1925, np.
- ⁴³Ibid. August 14, 1925, p. 8. Wages for male employees could not be documented.

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⁴⁴Mr. and Mrs. James Randall interview.

⁴⁵Gerald J. Stout. Successful Truck Farming. New York: Macmillan Co.,
1958, p. 172.

⁴⁶Monett Weekly Times, June 5, 1925, p. 1.

⁴⁷Ibid. September 18, 1925, np.

⁴⁸Ibid. May 12, 1922, np.

⁴⁹Ibid. September 11, 1925, np.

⁵⁰Ibid. September 18, 1925, np.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid. September 11, 1925, np.

⁵³Ibid. August 2, 1925, p. 1.

⁵⁴Ibid. July 16, 1926, np.

⁵⁵Ibid. July 23, 1926, np. and July 16, 1926, np.

⁵⁶Ibid. September 18, 1925, np. and July 16, 1926, np.

⁵⁷Ibid. September 18, 1925, np.

⁵⁸Ibid. August 7, 1925, p. 2.

⁵⁹Ibid. January 29, 1926, np. and July 16, 1926, np.

⁶⁰Ibid. January 29, 1926, np.

⁶¹Ibid. July 16, 1926, np.

⁶²Ibid. June 4, 1926, np.

⁶³Ibid. November 6, 1925, p. 6.

⁶⁴Ibid.

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⁶⁵From a Monett, Mo. newspaper clipping, dated 1945, from the Sperandio Family Scrapbook. Scrapbook is in possession of Mary Sperandio, Verona, Missouri.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Mr. and Mrs. James Randall interview.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Paul Johns. "Tomato Canning Memories." Missouri Life. V. 8, March-April, 1980, p. 13.

⁷¹Ibid, p. 13.

⁷²Mr. and Mrs. James Randall interview.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Sixty-Third and Sixty-fourth Annual Reports of the Labor and Industrial Inspection Department. Jefferson City: Labor and Industrial Inspection Department, 1943, pp. 30-31; 42-43; and 62-63.

⁷⁵Vicki Ruiz, p. 23.

⁷⁶Sixty-third and Sixty-fourth Annual Reports of the Labor and Industrial Department, pp. 30-31 and 42-43.

⁷⁷Henry A. Jones and Joseph T. Rosa. Truck Crop Plants. London: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1928, pp. 316-318.

⁷⁸J.C. Grady. "The Missouri Vegetable and Strawberry Industry." Research Bulletin No. 756. Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri College of Agriculture, Agricultural Experiment Station, February, 1961, p. 3.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point 120' northwest of the southwest corner of the intersection of Calton Mill Road and an unnamed county road in the southwest quarter of section 17, T25N, R26W, go 100' southwest; then 300' northwest, crossing Little Flat Creek; then 400' northeast, again crossing Little Flat Creek and Calton Mill Road; then 300' southeast; then 300' southwest, crossing Calton Mill Road to the point of origin. Total district acreage is approximately 2.75 acres.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries encompass the nucleus of Tom Town's business activity. It includes only those resources which are historically significant and retain integrity. The boundaries follow a rectangular pattern which includes only that land which immediately surrounds and which connects the remaining significant resources. The boundary does not attempt to include any of the homes of this dispersed settlement, the raceway whose historical integrity has been significantly impaired by fill and by grading, any major segment of the Little Flat Creek, or two nearby small deteriorated sheds.

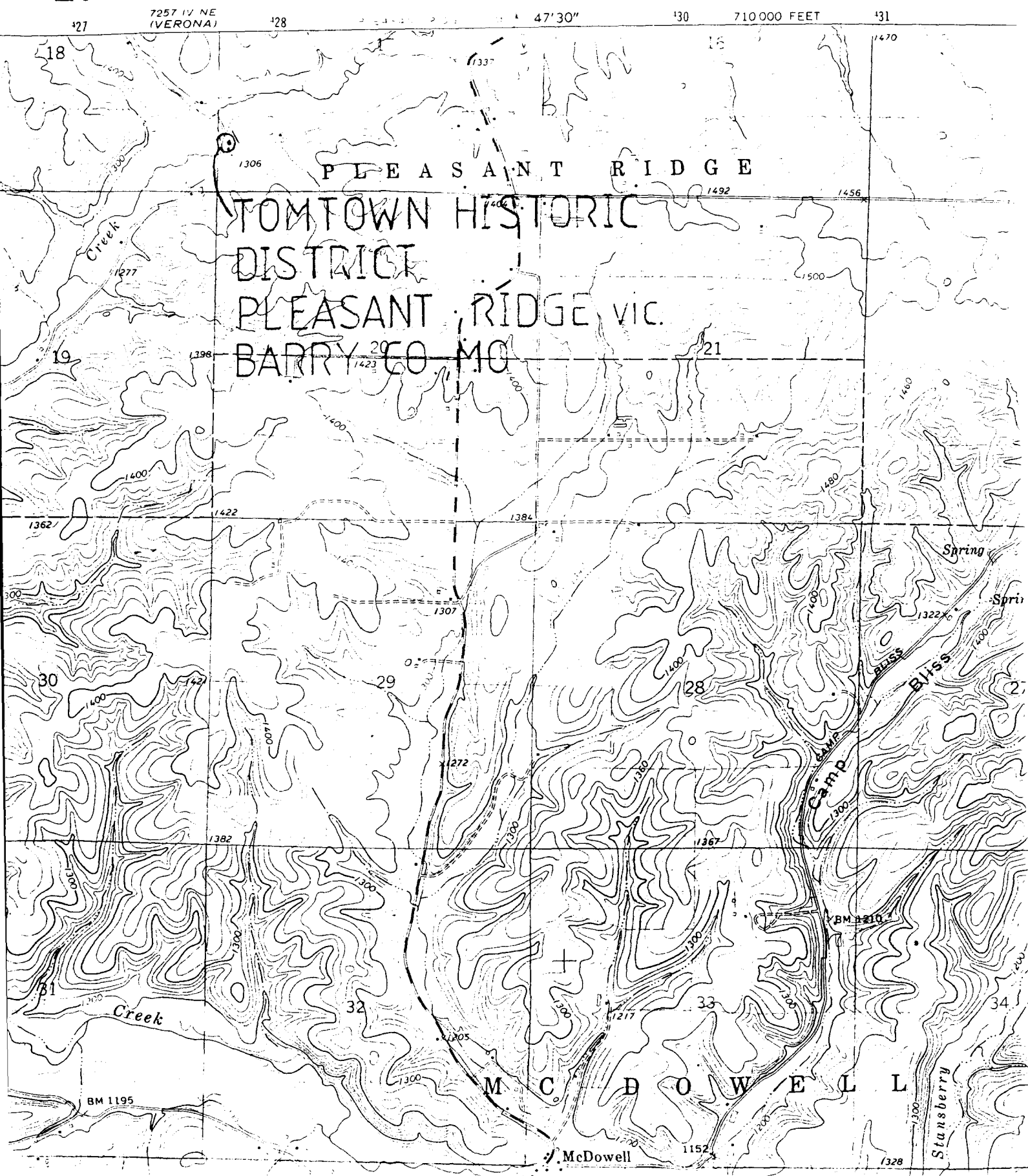
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2. Hugh Davidson
Preservation Planner
and State Contact Person
Historic Preservation Program
Department of Natural Resources
P. O. Box 176
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102
Date: August 11, 1989
Telephone: 314/751-5377

7.5 1.



Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings
Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository:

Missouri State Cultural Resource
Inventory, Jefferson City, MO

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Approximately 2.75 acres

UTM References

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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

☒ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

☒ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

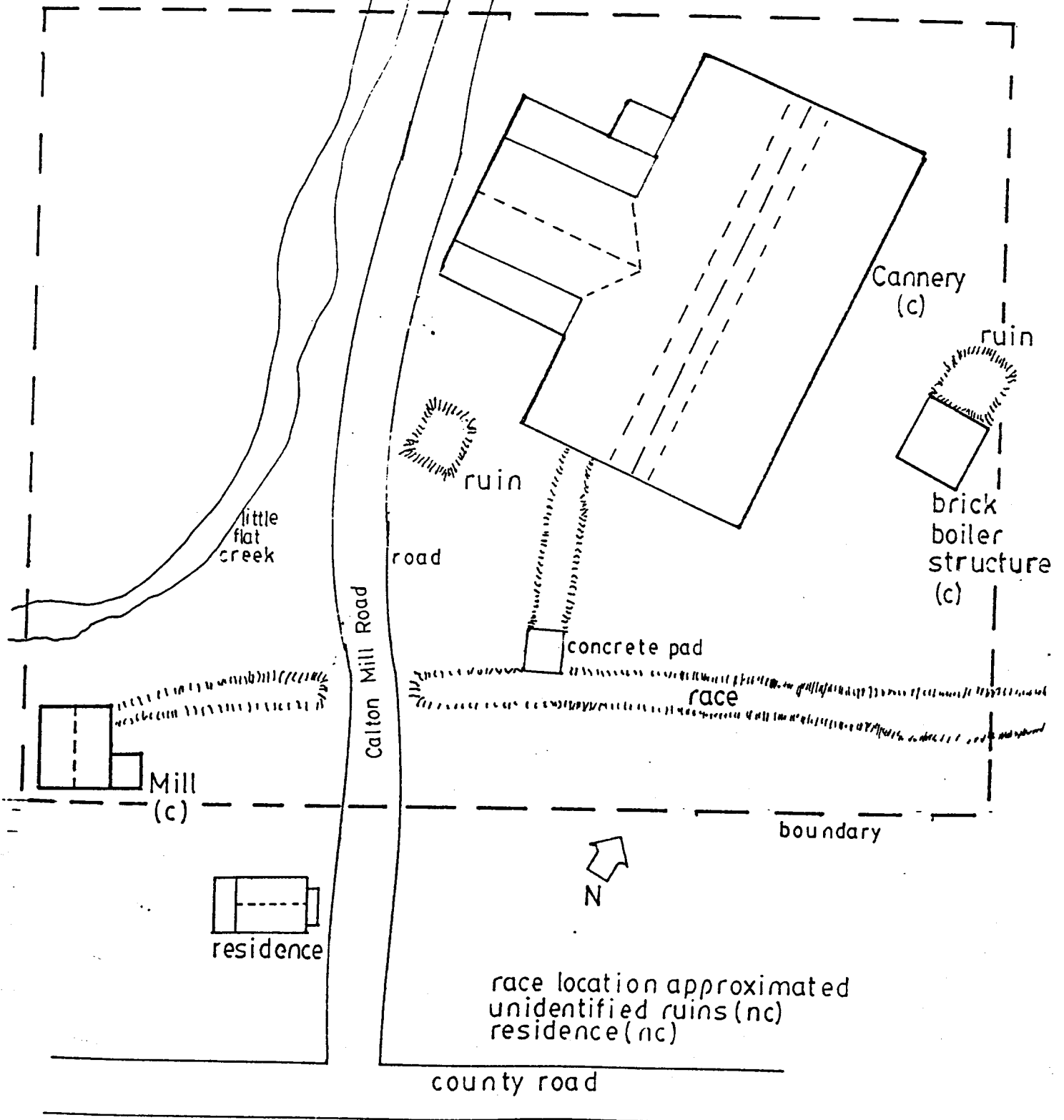
name/title 1. Priscilla Jackson-Evans, Consulting Historian

organization _____ date June, 1989

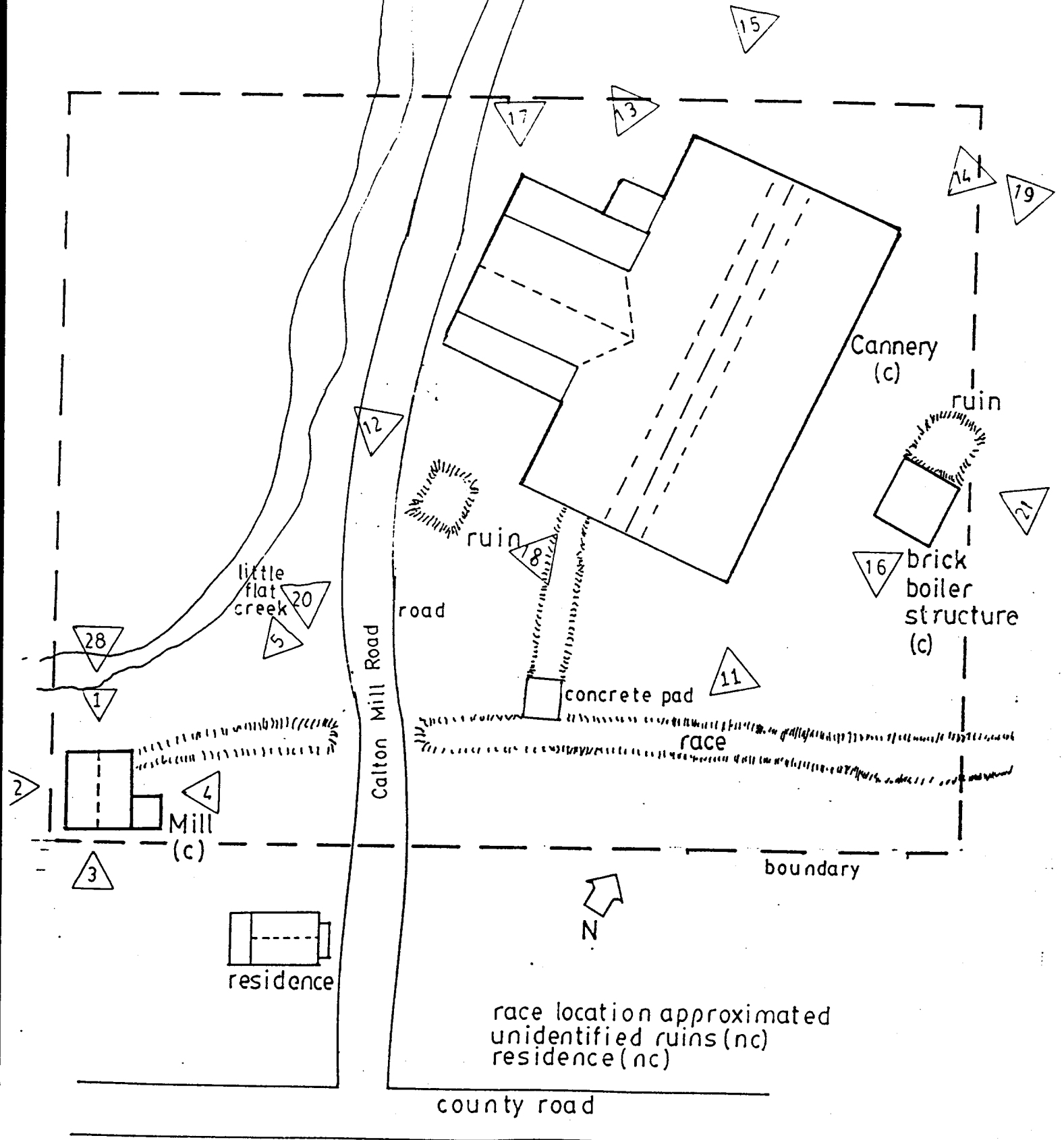
street & number 6106 Charlotte telephone 816/361-6932

city or town Kansas City state Missouri zip code 64110

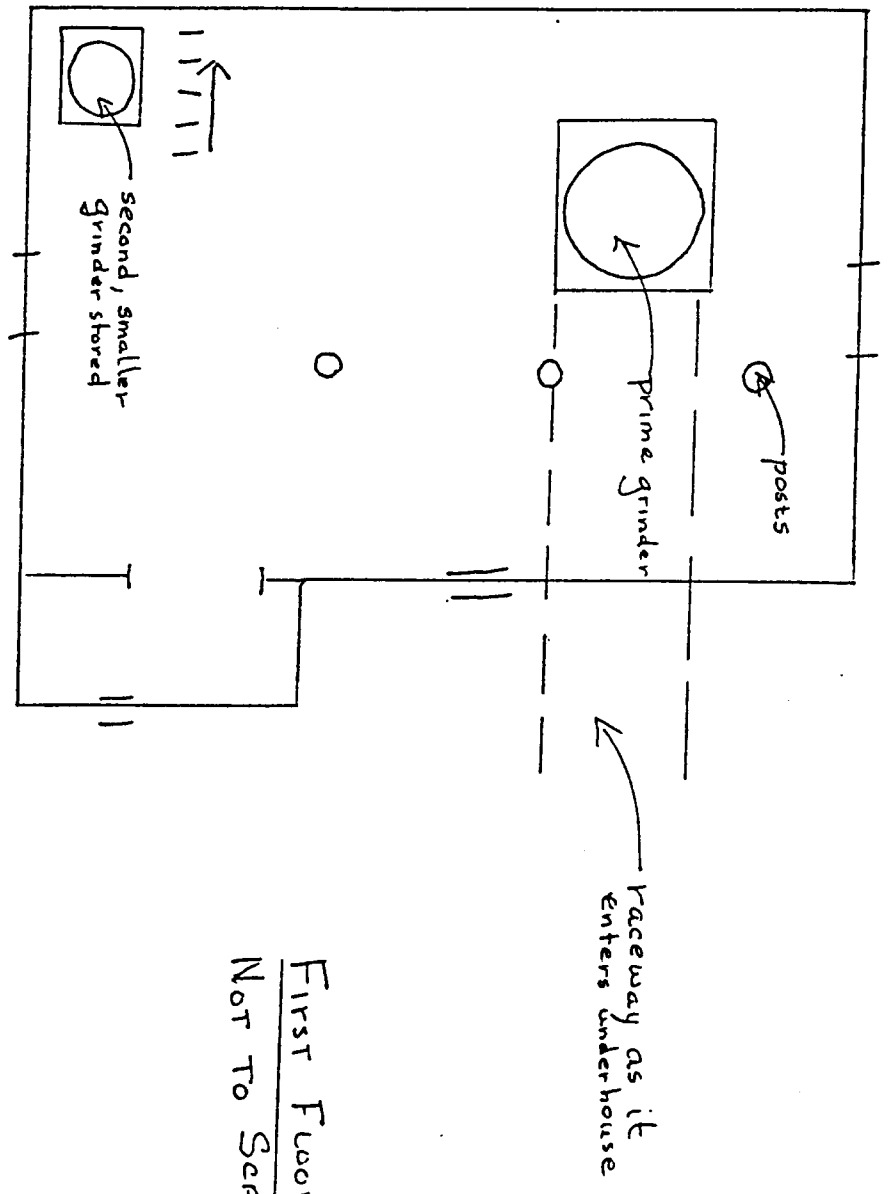
TOMTOWN HISTORIC
DISTRICT
BARRY CO., MO



TOMTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT
BARRY CO., MO



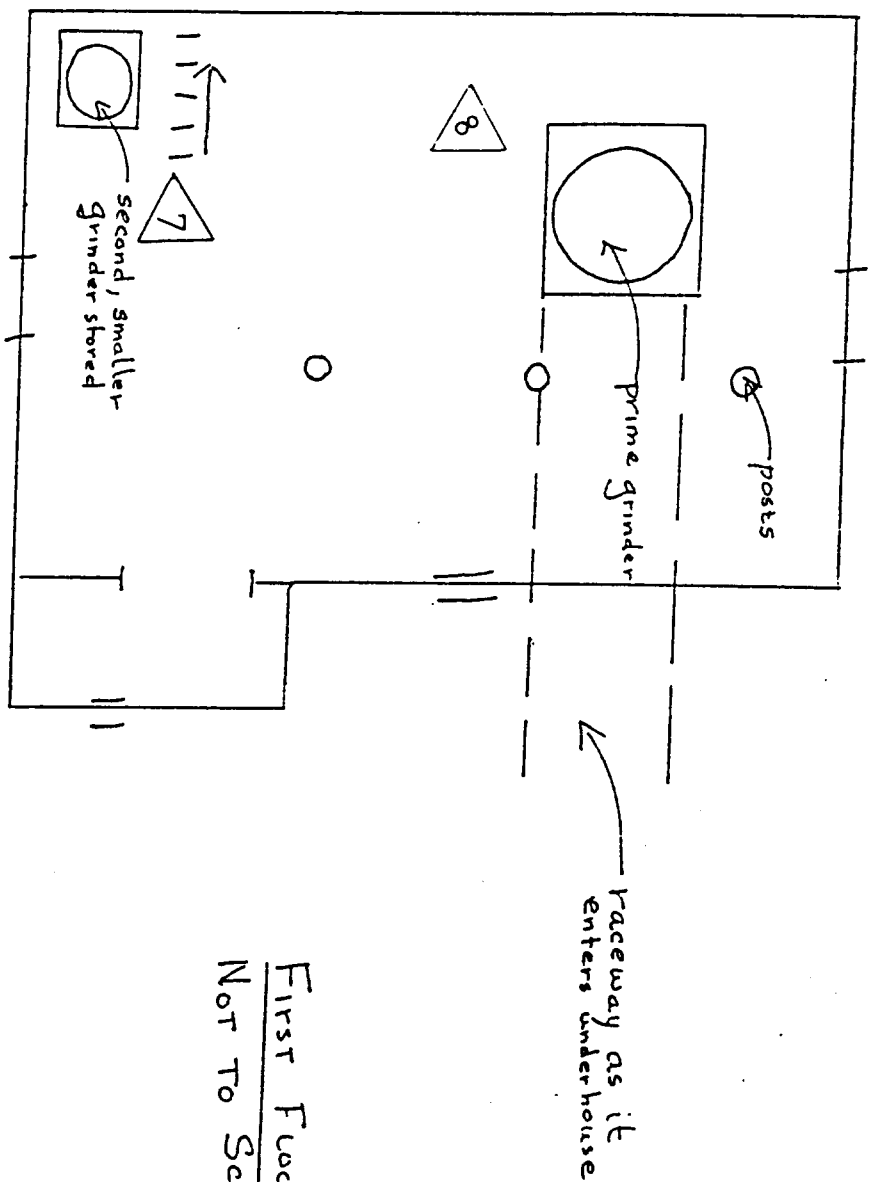
CALTON MILL
 Tom Town Historic District
 R.R.1 Verona, Mo. (Barry Co.)
 drawn by: P. Jackson Evans
 September, 1988



First Floor
 Not To Scale

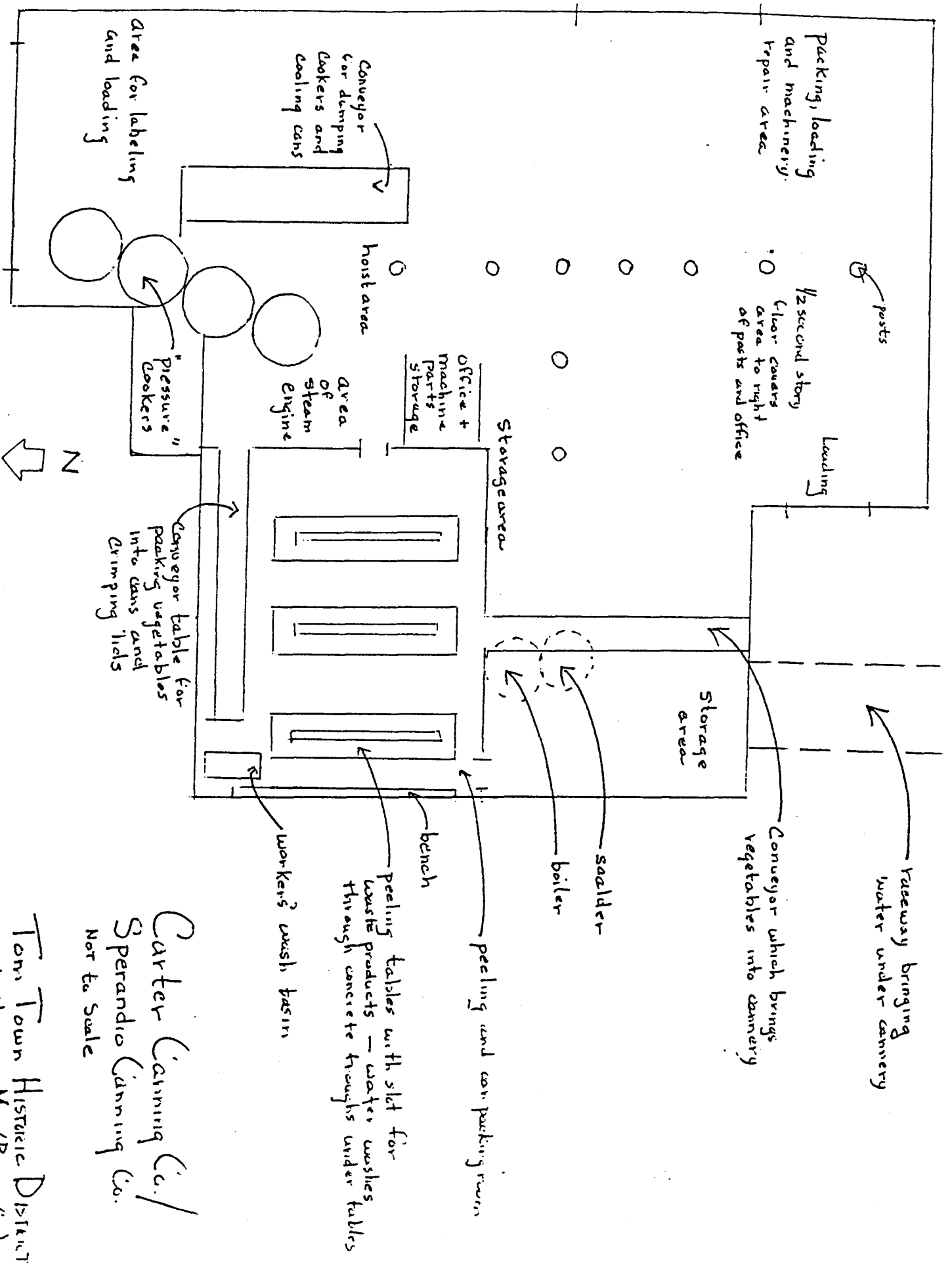


CALTON MILL
Town Historic District
 R.R. 1 Verona, Mo. (Barry Co.)
 drawn by: P. Jackson-Evans
 September, 1988

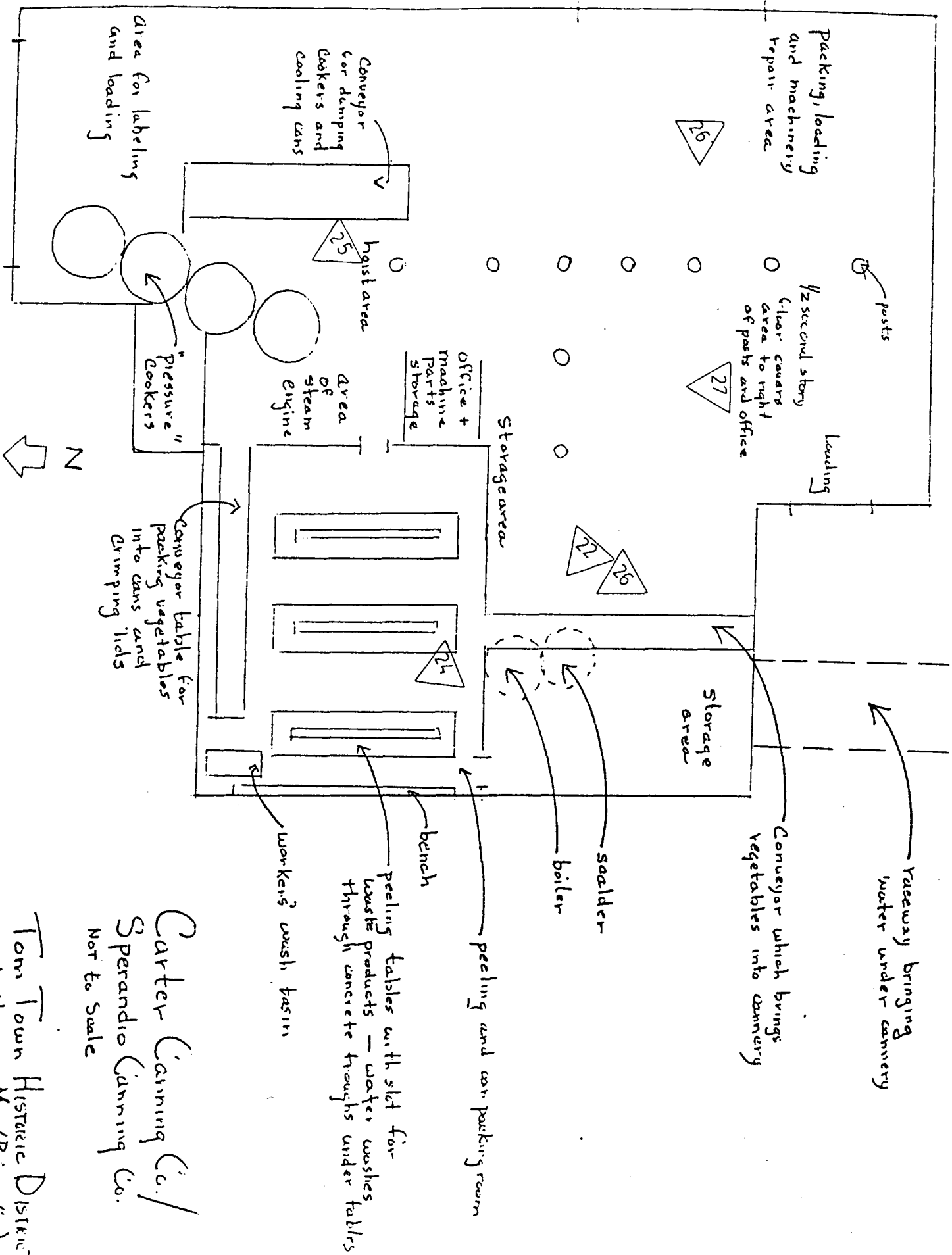


FIRST FLOOR
 NOT TO SCALE





Tom Town Historic District
 K.R. Verona, Mo. (Buckey Co.)
 drawn by: P. Jackson Evans
 August, 1988



Carter Canning Co.
Sperandio Canning Co.
Not to scale

Tom Town Historic District
Kirtland, Verona, Mo. (Brikey Co.)
drawn by: P. Jackson Evans









